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DESIRABLE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR TEACHER SELECTION.

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BASED ON SPECIFIC EXPERIENCES IN THE CINCINNATI SCHOOL SYSTEM, THREE CRITERIA ARE SUGGESTED FOR A TEACHER SELECTION PROCEDURE BASED ON ORAL, RATHER THAN WRITTEN EXAMINATION. (1) REFERENCES ARE VALUABLE, BUT THEY VARY GREATLY IN QUALITY. GREATER RELIABILITY IS ACHIEVED BY REQUIRING THE REFERENCES ON SPECIFIC FORMS, WHICH CAN BE ANALYZED AND SCORED. THEY ARE GIVEN A WEIGHT OF 20 PERCENT. (2) ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, ESPECIALLY IN STUDENT TEACHING, HAS PROVED TO BE A MODERATELY RELIABLE INDICATOR OF COMPETENCE IN TEACHING. WHILE THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS, ON THE WHOLE THE BETTER THE ACADEMIC RECORD, THE MORE PROMISING THE PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM. ACADEMIC RECORD IS GIVEN 30 PERCENT OF THE WEIGHT. (3) OF THE THREE SELECTION FACTORS USED, THE ORAL INTERVIEW TENDS TO HAVE THE MOST CONSISTENT AND PREDICTIVE VALUE IN FORECASTING TEACHING SUCCESS AND IS THEREFORE GIVEN THE MOST WEIGHT, 50 PERCENT. ALL THREE FACTORS ARE NEEDED TOGETHER, BUT PRE-EMPLOYMENT SELECTION IS AT BEST ONLY RELATIVELY SELECTIVE. THEREFORE, THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD SHOULD BE VIEWED AS PART OF THE SELECTION PROCEDURE. THIS DOCUMENT APPEARED IN GILBERT, H.B., AND LANG, G., "TEACHER SELECTION METHODS," 1967. (RP)

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TEACHER SELECTION METHODS

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Desirable Policies and Procedures for Teacher Selection

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That teacher selection procedures in public schools vary widely is an understatement of considerable magnitude. This variability is to be expected since the control of public schools in this country is so highly decentralized and local in nature.

In general, however, selection processes fall into two broad categories. One places a premium upon written and oral examination procedures; the other puts emphasis upon other less precise criteria and relies more upon the oral interview. At the risk of oversimplification, the former may be characterized by the term objectivity; the latter, subjectivity.

That one process is manifestly superior and more effective than the other has been argued for many years. During the early 1950's the proponents of "both schools of thought" used the agenda of annual meetings of the American Association of Examiners and Administrators of Educational Personnel[1] to debate the issue of examination-oriented selection procedures versus non-examination techniques. Neither side quite convinced the other of the superiority of its point of view. The great debate ended more in stalemate than in victory.

The use of well-designed, time-tested and carefully validated examinations in teacher selection in some school systems is justified on the grounds of historical precedent, legal requirement, urgent necessity or some other compelling reason. At the same time, other systems use different procedures, justifying their use on equally logical grounds. The point is that school systems are at different stages in time and circumstance in their developmental growth. They reflect unique local requirements and conditions. They conform to specific demands made of them.

The assumption is sometimes made that examination-oriented selection procedures are preferable, that they are more "scientific" and more effective in selecting good teachers than non-examination techniques.

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[1]Since 1959, called American Association of School Personnel Administrators.

If this assumption is valid, then it seems to follow that other systems should adopt more examination-type procedures. Why do they not do so? Is it the result of unenlightenment? Is it due to lack of professional resources and skilled know-how? Is there an insufficiency of commitment to sound personnel administration? Or is it due to other plausible reasons?

It is logical also to raise the question as to whether or not it is possible to increase the objectivity of so-called subjective selection procedures without, however, completely adopting specific examination instruments.

This paper is addressed to the consideration of the policies and procedures of teacher selection in the Cincinnati Public Schools where I was, until just recently, Assistant Superintendent of Administration and Personnel. Written and oral examinations are not employed in Cincinnati but care is taken to compile "subjective data" in a manner that will yield eligibility scores which make it possible to rank applicants so that those with higher scores can be employed before those with lower scores. Cut-off points are established to eliminate the marginal and weak candidates.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to show how so-called subjective selection procedures may be made objective, eligibility scores established, candidates ranked and selection may be made in terms of relative rankings.

Certification - Written and oral examinations are more necessary when qualifications for certification are being ascertained. On the other hand, however, many state departments of education grant certificates on the basis of approved patterns of preparation without requiring the candidate to take qualifying examinations.

In those instances, therefore, where state departments of education certificate teachers, it is possible to assume that some degree of selectivity has already taken place first, during the teacher education process and secondly, at the time the certificate is granted. This means, consequently, that the employing school system has some assurance that properly certificated applicants with sound preparation from accredited teacher education institutions have already been screened and evaluated to some degree.

The relevance of the above observation is that school systems not responsible for examining for certification have certain assurances about the relative qualifications of candidates without administering comprehensive testing procedures. Certification and credentials provide varying degrees of the necessary evidence for determining eligibility for appointment.

Preparation - While there is still considerable variation in the quality of preparation in different teacher education institutions, higher and higher standards of preparation are required in an increasing number of colleges and universities. NCATE[2] approved institutions have particularly high preparational requirements. Candidates from these institutions have been subjected to many measures of selectivity. This gives further assurance and removes some of the necessity to assume that total selection is the responsibility of the employing school system.

The Cincinnati Selection Plan

After applicants have been identified through recruitment efforts, a careful selection process is used to determine those best qualified for employment. The employment policy of the school system is to employ from the available applicants those best qualified to fill the positions which are open.

Procedure - Step 1 consists of processing the application. This involves inspecting the application form to see if it is completely and properly filled out. Care is taken to make sure that the record of past employment is complete, without gaps. A complete transcript of college credits is required. A copy of the teaching certificate is also required if the applicant holds one. If a beginning teacher, the applicant is required to show evidence of having fulfilled the requirements necessary to obtain the certificate.

Step 2 involves the processing of professional references. Evaluation forms are sent to all persons whom the applicant has given as professional references. Care is taken to ascertain if the names given represent persons who are in a position to give responsible, recent and relevant evaluations of the candidate's qualifications. If this is not the case, contact is made with the applicant for additional references. All references are then evaluated as described later.

Step 3 is the analysis of the application. The application, references, evidence of certification or eligibility for certification are analyzed to determine if the minimum standards for employment have been met or can be met.

Step 4 is the oral interview. If the candidate meets minimum standards on the basis of academic preparation and professional references and if vacancies exist for which he is qualified, an oral interview is scheduled.

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[2]National Commission for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

When the interview is held at the headquarters of the Board of Education, every effort is made to have at least two interviewers. One represents the personnel office; the other either someone from the department of instruction or administration. Frequently, a principal is invited to serve on the interviewing team.

In campus interviews, the team interview is not always possible, although the practice of sending teams on campus interviewing trips is on the increase. In campus interviews, the oral interview takes place before the application is processed and credentials are received. However, care is exercised to study the available records on file in the appointments' office of the training institution.

Four factors are stressed in the oral interview:

(a) Scope and quality of training and preparation
(b) Aptitude for teaching and working with children
(c) Dedication and desire to teach
(d) Character, personal fitness and mental health

Determination of Eligibility - Upon completion of all application procedures, an eligibility grouping is determined for each candidate as follows:

Priority Group A - This is the preferred group and all candidates in this group are considered for employment before candidates in all other priority groups are considered.

Priority Group B - This group is considered as satisfactory, meaning that minimum employment standards have been met. Those in this group are considered after all those in Group A have been employed or have rejected offers of employment.

Priority Group C - These are the marginal candidates and are employable only in emergency situations. These applicants usually are lacking in one or more of the basic requirements for full contract employment.

Priority Group D - Persons in this group are not employable.

The following criteria are used to determine priority groupings. The first criterion is professional references. If an

applicant has had no teaching experience but has completed student teaching, the references used are those of his cooperating teacher and the university supervisor. The references of experienced teachers must be only those administrators and supervisors who have observed teaching performance.

In case of an odd number of references, the median reference (in terms of score) is used. If there is an even number of references equally divided between two priority groups, the applicant is assigned to the higher group. Professional references are classified into four levels as follows: A-Outstanding; B-Strong; C-Acceptable; and D-Weak or below.

The second criterion is the oral interview. If there are three interviewers, the median rating is used. When there are two interviewers, and the ratings vary, the rating given by the representative from the personnel office shall be used. (The rationale for this determination is that the interviewers in the personnel office have been carefully trained to do interviews and on the average their ratings have shown greater validity over the years in relation to success in teaching.)

The four levels of the oral interview are: A=86 - 100; B=80 - 85; C=76 - 79; and D=75 or below.

The third criterion is the academic preparation of the candidate. The transcript of credits is analyzed. If the point hour ratio on the transcript is given (in most cases it is), the following scale is used to assign priority groups. In the event the point hour ratio is not given, it is calculated by dividing the total number of hours in the total number of quality points.

Overall eligibility groupings

1. The priority groupings for references, academic record and the oral interview are converted into points.

Priority Group	Points
A	3
B	2
C	1
D	0

2. The points for references, academic record and oral interview are multiplied as follows:

Points	
References	x 2
Transcript	x 3
Oral interview	x 5

3. The total points for references, academic record and the oral interview are added and an assignment is made to the proper priority group.

Priority Group	Total Points
A	26-30
B	16-25
C	6-15
D	5 or below

Health Examination - The offer of a position to an applicant who qualifies for appointment on the basis of references, academic record and oral interview is contingent upon passage of a physical examination. This must be given by a Board of Education physician, the physician-in-charge being a psychiatrist. If the individual fails the physical examination, the offer of a position is withdrawn.

In some cases, late in the summer and due to scheduling problems it may not be possible to get the results of the examination until after the individual reports to his assignment. When this occurs, it is understood that the appointment will be limited to one year with contract not being renewable.

Obviously, if the physical deficiency is of such a nature as to pose a risk to children, the individual is released and a replacement is obtained as quickly as possible upon receipt of the results of the physical examination.

Most of the physical examinations are given by general practitioners but the results of the examinations are reviewed by the physician-psychiatrist in charge. Thus, if there are symptoms of mental health deficiencies, the personnel office may be alerted so that appropriate action may be taken.

Periodic physical examinations are continued during the tenure of the teacher at intervals of three years. These may be at Board of Education expense, using the services of Board physicians or the individual may use his own physician provided the examination is reported on forms provided by the Board.

References - The three basic criteria in selection are the

references, academic record and the oral interview. It is recognized that professional references vary in reliability. Some are relatively worthless; others are quite valuable.

Greater reliability is achieved by requiring the references on specified forms which can be analyzed and scored as has been earlier described. References are given the least weight among all the factors in recognition of their varying reliability, i.e., 20 per cent of the total.

Academic Record - Academic achievement, especially in student teaching, has proved to be a moderately reliable indicator of competence in teaching. There are exceptions to this generalization, however. Occasionally a candidate with excellent grades in college does not do well in teaching. On the other hand, one with average or slightly above average grades does very well in the classroom.

On the whole, however, the better the academic record, the more promising the prospects for success in the classroom. In weight, the academic record is given 30 per cent.

Oral Interview - The oral interview is given the most weight in selection, 50 per cent. Care is taken to see that it is thorough and consistently done. Multiple interviews are preferable to single interviews. Of the three selection factors used, it tends to have the most consistent and predictive value in forecasting teaching success.

No single criterion is adequate, however. The three factors in combination do the best job. Mistakes occur, on occasion, regardless of the care and fidelity with which the selection process is carried out. Pressure, rush of time and volume of work at peak periods in teacher selection introduce error. The incidence of that error, however, can be kept small by deliberate effort on the part of personnel administrators and examiners.

Conclusion

Much has been written concerning selection techniques and measures. Complete reliability and validity are difficult, regardless of the type of procedures used. Insightful personnel administrators and examiners can identify a number of relevant qualities that a good teacher must have. The problem is how to assess those qualities with certainty and consistency. This is the point at which difference of opinion exists and which is the concern of this conference.

Pre-employment selection, at best, can only be relatively

successful. For this reason, it seems feasible to consider the probationary period as a part of the selection process. During the first three years of service, especially the first or second, much reliable "evidence" may be obtained which can be used to determine ultimate success in the classroom.

Selection policies and procedures must be continuously studied and tested for validity and reliability to the extent that this is possible. Most school personnel administrators and examiners are quite conscious of this imperative. As promising techniques are revealed through exchanges of information in conferences of this type, each school system participating is enabled to re-evaluate and refine its own procedures.

The great need is for more research and a greater exchange of information. There needs to be more dialogue among personnel administrators and examiners regarding the implications of this research and the data it reveals.